



FALL 2005 NEWSLETTER

CHISAGO SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

RON & SUE JOHNSON CHOSEN AS LOCAL CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR FOR 2005

The Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Board of Supervisors honored Ron and Sue Johnson as the District's Outstanding Conservationist for 2005. This recognition is given each year to a Chisago County resident that has displayed outstanding efforts in soil and water conservation on their land. The award is part of an annual program sponsored by the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) and the *Farmer Magazine*.

The Johnsons own and operate a 160 acre dairy farm in southern Chisago County on First Lake. Their family owned and operated farm has been in Ron's family since 1927. The Johnsons have a self sufficient farming operation that relies on dairy and crop farming, along with the sale of home grown beef from their farm. Ron and Sue realize they have achieved their success in farming from the strong support of their family. Ron's parents reside on the family farm and provide daily assistance with the farming operation. The same is true of their three children, who are learning that everyone does their share to make the farm profitable and prosperous.

The Johnsons are carrying on their past generation's values of being good stewards to the land by improving soil conditions and water quality through the assistance of the Chisago SWCD. Currently, the Johnsons operate approximately 250 acres of crop land in Chisago County. They have worked closely with District staff to develop comprehensive plans that include soil, water, air and plants. The Johnsons have worked with District and Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) staff to install grass filter strips, clean water diversions, an animal waste storage facility, abandoned well sealing, and lakeshore stabilization

along a portion of their shoreline along First Lake. They also follow the recommendations of a certified nutrient and pest management plan and implement minimum tillage on their tillable acres.

The Johnsons also make time for their community. Both are very active members at Chisago Lake Lutheran, Ron is the current treasurer and Sue teaches Sunday school and is a confirmation guide. Sue is a member of the Chisago Lakes School District agriculture advisory board and has been a classroom volunteer since 1997. They are very active with the local 4H chapter; they provide livestock, via the local 4H lease a cow program, for local youth to train and show at the Chisago County Fair. The Johnsons are also members of the Chisago County American Dairy Association. They hosted the Farmers Share Luncheon in 2000, yearly school tours for both the local Chisago Lakes School District and several school districts within the Twin Cities area, and local SWCD and MASWCD Area III tours.



Pictured above are Ron & Sue Johnson with their children Bradley, Kelly & Nathan

The Johnsons have shown a strong commitment to preserving their family farm while co-existing in a rapidly developing county. They are always eager to work with and show others the successes of a small family owned and operated farm within Chisago County. This commitment has been evident through the countless number of projects that they have completed through the SWCD/NRCS office and the strong leadership they have shown in the community through involvement with a variety of local, state and international organizations.

The Johnsons will be the honored guests of the Chisago SWCD at the 2005 MASWCD's annual convention, where they are one of eight finalists for the MASWCD State Outstanding Conservationist Award, to be held in Bloomington on December 6, 2005.



NEW DISTRICT TECHNICIAN JOINS STAFF



The Chisago SWCD is happy to welcome Casey Ambers to the District. She joined our staff as a District Technician in October of 2005. Casey comes to us from the City of Lakeville where she was employed as an Environmental Resource Technician. Prior to working for the City of Lakeville, Casey held a similar position for the St. Croix Land and Water Conservation Department in Baldwin, WI. Her main

responsibilities with the Chisago SWCD include promoting the conservation programs available through the Federal Farm Bill (see article below) and assisting with the coordination of the District Tree Program.

Casey has degrees in Conservation and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) from the University of Wisconsin at River Falls. She is looking forward to working with landowners to assist them with their natural resource concerns. In her free time she enjoys playing golf, going to the cabin, hiking and walking. Casey can be reached at 651/674-2333 or by e-mail at: casey.ambers@mn.nacdnet.net.



FEDERAL PROGRAMS OFFER INCENTIVES TO LANDOWNERS

One of the main objectives of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is to provide voluntary conservation technical assistance to local landowners and communities in planning and implementing conservation systems. Landowners may request NRCS and SWCD staff to meet with them to discuss natural resource solutions to improve: soil health, water quantity and quality, pasture health, woodlands, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, improve and conserve wetlands and reduce erosion.

Once the concerns have been identified, a conservation plan is developed listing the conservation practice or practices the landowner may apply to address their concern. There are several conservation programs available to land owners that provide help with the installation of the wide number of conservation practices. The following is a brief description of some of the programs available.



Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)

EQIP provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address soil, water and related natural resource concerns. It offers cost-share payments of up to 50% for installing eligible conservation practices,

and incentive payments for applying land management practices. Stop in now to find out which practices are eligible and to enroll for 2006 EQIP.

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

WHIP is a voluntary program for landowners who desire to develop or improve wildlife habitat on their land. It provides cost-sharing to help establish or improve fish and wildlife habitat. Cost-sharing will reimburse up to 75% of the costs and contracts cannot exceed \$10,000. This program is a continuous sign-up.

Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP)

CCRP is a voluntary program that encourages landowners to do permanent tree and shrub or grass plantings in areas that need protection from erosion, or to serve as a buffer. The vegetative cover also serves to improve water and soil quality. These permanently planted areas help to maintain a healthy wildlife population by providing additional sources of food, nesting sites, and cover.

Landowners enter into a 10 to 15 year contract, during which the landowner receives an annual rental payment for the number of acres enrolled. Cost share assistance is provided for vegetation establishment, as well as certain incentive payments. Eligible participants who enroll into selected practices receive a one-time up-front Signing Incentive Payment (SIP) of \$100-\$150 per acre and/or a Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) equal to 40% of the eligible costs. This program is a continuous sign up.

Landowners who are interested in learning more about these program are encouraged to call the Chisago County NRCS office in North Branch at 651/674-7160, or visit the Minnesota NRCS website at www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov.

SUMMER 2005 RAINFALL AMOUNTS

There are 13 volunteer rainfall monitors (at least one representing each township) throughout Chisago County who report each month's rainfall totals. This was a very interesting summer with very dry hot periods, however, when it did rain...it really rained. Here are the average summer totals from the summer of 2005:

May/2.7" June/6.0" July/2.2" August/2.3" September/6.4" October/7.3"



On October 4th and 5th, rainfall amounts were as high as 9.5", recorded at the Rush City Airport.
To learn more about the rainfall we've received, just log onto our District web page at www.chisagoswcd.org.

CHANGES AT THE KOST DAM PARK

If you have visited the Kost Dam County Park recently you may have noticed a few changes. In 2004, Laird Mork Chisago County Parks Director, contacted the Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District regarding an ongoing erosion problem at the park and his concerns over the lack of an emergency spillway on the earthen berm of the Kost Dam.

The first project that was recently completed was the installation of an emergency spillway (pictured here) on the earthen berm of the Kost Dam. Laird stated that on two separate occasions water has over topped the earthen berm portion of the Kost Dam and has caused excessive damage to the structure. With the newly installed emergency spillway the Kost Dam now has a stable spillway area for excess water to flow during extreme high water periods, which last occurred during June of 2003. Laird Mork stated that he will sleep a lot better now during periods of high water knowing that the newly installed emergency spillway should prevent any future damage to the structure and protect down-



stream residents, roads and bridges from severe flooding due to a failure in the earthen berm.

The second erosion problem was stabilized by installing a diversion with an underground outlet. The purpose of a diversion and the underground outlet is to collect and divert excess water from one area and convey it through a conduit installed beneath the surface of the ground to a suitable outlet. The project was partially funded through District's state cost share program.

Both of these projects were designed by the IMPACK 6 Technical Service Area Engineer Nichole Sternquist. IMPACK 6 is a collaboration of the Isanti, Mille Lacs, Pine, Aitkin, Chisago and Kanabec SWCDs that provide engineering and technical assistance to landowners within these six counties.

If you have an erosion problem on your property, you may be eligible for both technical and financial assistance from the Chisago SWCD. For more information about the District's state cost share program contact the Chisago SWCD at 651/674-2333 or check out our web page at www.chisagoswcd.org.

Board of Supervisors

Craig Mold.....District #1 (Fish Lake, Nessel and Rushseba)
Roland Cleveland...District #2 (North Branch, Harris and Lent)
Mary Ann Jay.....District #3 (Amador and Sunrise)
Joan Barnes.....District #4 (Chisago Lakes and Wyoming)
Joseph Eichten.....District #5 (Franconia and Shafer)

District Staff 651/674-2333

Craig Mell-District Administrator
Susan Humble-Administrative Assistant
Casey Ambers-District Technician

Assisted by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (651)674-7160 ext. 3

Robert Korth-Acting District Conservationist
Julie Lindner-Soil Conservation Technician

If you would like to learn more about the Chisago SWCD, the projects we work on, educational opportunities, or the programs offered, just log on to our District's web site at:

www.chisagoswcd.org

We also have a complete listing of the trees that the District offers for sale (just like the insert) with links from each species to complete descriptions and photos. As well as a listing of the other items the District offers for sale to the public, you can find a large number of helpful links to other government agencies, and any new or upcoming projects.



STATE POSTER WINNER

If you went to the Minnesota State Fair this past September you may have noticed the poster pictured here in the DNR Building. Congratulations to Anna Torgerson of North Branch for her third place finish at the state level. This past years theme was "Trees...Rooted in Our Future". The 2005-2006 theme is "Our Soil...A Layer of Life". Call the SWCD office at 651/674-2333, or log onto our web site at: www.chisagoswcd.org if you are interested in finding out how to participate.



Chisago Soil & Water Conservation District

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POSTAL PATRON

2005 CHILDREN'S WATER FESTIVAL A SUCCESS

Friday, September 30, 2005 turned out to be the perfect fall day. The sun shone brightly as over 750 Chisago County 5th graders, 27 teachers, as well as numerous chaperones, presenters and volunteers all converged on Camp Ojiketa in Chisago City for a fun-filled day of learning.

The third annual Chisago County Children's Water Festival provided all the students a hands-on opportunity to learn about the abounding water resources in our county, and how they need to be protected for the future.



Brandon Roux, UPN 29 Meteorologist, shared various weather experiments with the students. Clancy, one of only 3 mercury sniffing dogs in the world, taught about the dangers of mercury. Kids learned a variety of information about the fish that swim in our area lakes, the

St. Croix River, and the history of ice cutting. These are just a few topics that were covered during the all day event.

Thank you to ALL the presenters, volunteers, St. Cloud State student teachers, and especially to the sponsors who helped to make this event possible: Ander-

sen Windows, Boy Scout Troop 141, Camp Ojiketa, Campfire USA, Chisago City, Chisago County, Chisago County Historical Society, Chisago County Household Hazardous Waste, Chisago County Water Plan, Chisago

Lakes Lions Club, Chisago Lakes Rotary Club, Chisago Lakes Sanitation, Chisago SWCD, East Central Electric Operation Round Up, First National Bank of Wyoming, Forest Lake Athletic Association, Jimmy's Johnnys Inc., Lake State Federal Credit Union, Lindstrom Foods, MN Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, MN Department of Agriculture, MN Department of Natural Resources, MN Pollution Control Agency, MN Rural



Water Association, MN State University – St. Cloud, National Park Service, North Branch Community National Bank, North Branch Lions Club, North Branch Rotary Club, Pleasant Valley Orchard, Rush City Lions Club, Rush Lake Improvement Association, University of MN Extension Service, US Bank Chisago City, and Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church.

